

Venice and Its Musical Identity

Summer 2017

Instructor: Giuseppe Gerbino (gg2024@columbia.edu)

Course level: 3xxx – 3 points

Course Description

Throughout its history, Venice cultivated an idealized image of its political and civic identity. Music played a central role in the construction of the myth of the “Most Serene Republic” both through the prestige of the Venetian music establishment and as a symbol of social harmony and cohesion. This course explores the history of this unique bond between Venice and its musical self-fashioning.

The historical scope of the class includes key moments in the cultural life of Venice and its musical institutions: the development of polychorality in the architectural space of St. Mark’s Basilica; the opening of the first public opera houses and the commercialization of opera; the phenomenon of musical tourism, which attracted international visitors as early as the 17th century; the establishment of the music printing industry; and the cloistered virtuosity of the women musicians of the “conservatories.” The last part of the syllabus is devoted to the political legacy of Venice in 19th-century opera as well as to the construction of a nostalgic image of the city’s past musical splendor in twentieth-century music. Rather than following a strict chronological order, the syllabus is meant to reflect the topographical organization of Venetian society along the lines of the six *sestieri* and their musical venues, from the St. Mark’s Basilica, opera theaters, and aristocratic academies, to the charitable organizations known as *scuole grandi*, and the trade guilds for foreign communities (*fondachi*).

Bulletin description

Throughout its history, Venice cultivated an idealized image of its political and civic identity. Music played a central role in the construction of the myth of the “Most Serene Republic” both through the prestige of the Venetian music establishment and as a symbol of social harmony and cohesion. This course explores the history of this unique bond between Venice and its musical self-fashioning as well as the construction of a nostalgic image of Venice’s past musical splendor in nineteenth- and twentieth-century music.

Weekly schedule

The class will meet twice a week for 3 hours each day, for a total of six weeks.

Course Requirements

This course will be run as an undergraduate seminar. Students are expected to attend regularly and to participate actively (final grades will be penalized for unexcused absences). Students will take turns in leading class discussions. Class participation and presentations will account for 30% of the final grade. Students will also have to take a final exam (20%) and complete two essays (25% each) on a choice of assigned topics related to class discussion. Students will be required to attend two concerts outside class time. Guided visits to historical sites relevant to the course will be organized during class time.

Statement on Academic Integrity

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

Syllabus

Week 1

Class 1: Venice and Its Musical Myths

E. Rosand, "Music in the Myth of Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 30 (1977), 511–37.

I. Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory, and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2007), 6-58.

Class 2: Patrons and Academies

M. Feldman, *City Culture and the Madrigal at Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3-24, and 84-121.

I. Fenlon, "Gioseffo Zarlino and the Accademia Venetiana della Fama," in *Music and Culture in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 118-138.

Week 2

Class 1: Music and Architecture

D. Howard and L. Moretti: *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, Acoustics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

D. Bryant, "The *cori spezzati* of St. Mark's: Myth and Reality," *Early Music History: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Music* 1 (1981): 165-86.

Class 2: Composing and Singing in St. Mark's Basilica

J. Kurtzman, *The Monteverdi Vespers of 1610: Music, Context, Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

G.M. Ongaro: "All Work and No Play? The Organization of Work among Musicians in Late Renaissance Venice," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 25 (1995): 55–72.

Week 3

Class 1: Opera Goes Public: The *Serenissima* on Stage

E. Muir, "Why Venice? Venetian Society and the Success of Early Opera," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36/3 (2006): 331-353.

E. Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 10-34 and 126-154.

Class 2: The Business of Opera

B.L. Glixon, *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and his World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 109-214.

E. Selfridge-Field, *Song and Season: Science, Culture and Theatrical Time in Early Modern Venice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 87-112.

Week 4

Class 1: Venice, Libertines, and Roman History

W. Heller, "Tacitus Incognito: Opera as History in L'incoronazione di Poppea," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52/1(1999): 39-96.

E. Muir, *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance: Skeptics, Libertines, and Opera* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Class 2: Vis comica

B. Galuppi, *Il filosofo di campagna: drama giocoso in tre atti* (1754)

B. Marcello, *Il teatro alla moda* (1720). English translation in R. G. Pauly, "Benedetto Marcello's Satire on Early 18th-Century Opera," *Musical Quarterly* 34/2 (1948): 222-33.

Week 5

Class 1: Cloistered Virtuosity

J.L. Baldauf-Berdes, *Women Musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations, 1525–1855* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

M. Talbot, "The Pietà as viewed by Johann Christoph Maier (1795)," *Studi vivaldiani* 4 (2004): 75-118.

Class 2: The Red Priest

H. C. Robbins Landon, *Vivaldi: Voice of the Baroque* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1996), 34-166.

A. Carpentier, *Baroque Concerto* (London: A. Deutsch, 1991).

Week 6

Class 1: The Singing Doge

J. Johnson, "The Myth of Venice in Nineteenth-Century Opera," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 36/3 533-554.

G. Verdi, *I due Foscari* (1844).

Class 2: Death in Venice

C. Chowrimootoo, "Bourgeois Opera: Death in Venice and the Aesthetics of Sublimation," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 22/2 (2010): 175-216.

B. Britten, *Death in Venice* (1973).